

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 AID-05 VO-05 CA-01
/106 W

-----045227 250450Z /21

R 250051Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3675
INS/CO WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 3371

BANGKOK PASS TO REFUGEE COORDINATOR BARNES

HONG KONG PASS TO INS DIDIR FELDMAN

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: FACTORS AFFECTING BOAT REFUGEE FLOW TO MALAYSIA

1. WHILE MONITORING MEDIA REPORTS OF STEPPED-UP SRV NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY, POST HAS QUERIED BOAT CAMP REFUGEES REGARDING METHOD AND RAMIFICATIONS OF CONFISCATION. HAVING INTERVIEWED WELL-INFORMED SPOKESMEN FROM SEVEN RECENTLY-ARRIVED BOATS AT PULAU TENGAH REFUGEE CAMP DURING THE WEEK, THE FOLLOWING IS REPORTED.

2. ON THE MORNING OF 23 MARCH 1978, AN EARLY MORNING RADIO
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ANNOUNCEMENT ADVISED SAIGON RESIDENTS TO STANDBY FOR AN IMPORTANT BULLETIN. REFUGEES REPORTED THAT AT 0700 HOURS THE GOVERNMENT RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT ALL COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN SAIGON WOULD CEASE. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE REFUGEES SAID, GOVERNMENT CADRE OR DEPUTIZED SRV REPRESENTATIVES APPEARED AT PRESELECTED SHOPS AND, REFERRING TO PREVIOUSLY PREPARED INVENTORY LISTS, NOTED STOCKS, OF GOODS ON-HAND.

3. AFTER INVENTORIES HAD BEEN COMPLETED, REFUGEES REPORTED THAT OWNERS WERE GIVEN RECEIPTS FOR THEIR GOODS. STOCK WAS THEN REPORTEDLY IMPOUNDED OR CARTED AWAY TO GOVERNMENT STOREHOUSES.

4. MERCHANTS AFFECTED WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PRESENTED WITH DOCUMENTS UPON WHICH THEY WERE OBLIGED TO FILL IN DATE WHEN THEY WOULD REPORT FOR MOVEMENT TO NEW ECONOMIC ZONES (N.E.Z.'S) IN FORMER 3-MR AND NORTHERN 4-MR AREAS. REFUGEES SAID THAT CADRE THEN POLITELY THANKED MERCHANTS AND LEFT THEM WITH BARE MINIMUM OF RATIONS NEEDED UNTIL DEPARTURES FOR N.E.Z.'S

5. INCIDENTS OF MASSIVE CONFISCATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY FROM BUSINESSES TO INCLUDE OPEN-AIR STALLS, AND FROM "WEALTHY CAPITALIST" INDIVIDUALS, WERE REPORTED BY RECENTLY-ARRIVED REFUGEES FROM VUNG TAU AND RACH GIA AS WELL.

6. A RASH OF SUICIDES DURING AND IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF "NATIONALIZATIONS" WAS REPORTED BY REFUGEES WHO CLAIMED TO BE EYE-WITNESSES. A NEUROSURGEON FROM A SAIGON HOSPITAL CONFIRMED THESE REPORTS.

7. FISHERMEN AMONG THE REFUGEES SAID THAT ABOUT 70 PCT OF "CAPITALIST"-OWNED VESSELS OVER 20 METERS HAVE BEEN NATIONALIZED OVER PAST MONTHS. THEY SAID EVENING CELL MEETINGS CONDUCTED BY SRV CADRE INCREASINGLY EXTOL MERITS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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COLLECTIVIZATION. WHILE THEY EMPHASIZE THAT NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT HAS BEEN MADE REGARDING NATIONALIZATION OF ALL FISHING BOATS, THREE FISHING BOAT OWNERS FROM PHAN THIET AND VUNG TAU WERE SOLIDLY AGREED THAT THE HANDWRITING IS ON THE WALL. RUMORS HERD AROUND THE CAMP THAT FISHING BOATS WERE NOW OBLIGED TO TIE-UP AROUND POLICE CHECK-POINTS WHEN NOT ON APPROVED VOYAGES WERE NOT CONFIRMED BY BOAT OWNERS.

8. COMMENT: WHILE REFUGEE REPORTS HAVE THEIR OBVIOUS BIAS, IT DOES SEEM CLEAR THAT:

A) WIDESPREAD NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY INCREASED IN RECENT WEEKS.

B) FORCED MOVEMENTS TO N.E.Z.'S ARE ON THE UPSWING

C) WHILE A AND B HAVE OCCURRED TOO RECENTLY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO UNPRECEDENTED RATE OF ARRIVALS IN APRIL (1,909 REFUGEES TO DATE), DESPERATION AMONG DISPOSSESSED PERSONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTE TO AND PERHAPS SWELL, TO FURTHER REFUGEE FLOW. EXCELLENT WEATHER (I.E., SAILING) CONDITIONS AND APPREHENSION THAT THE TOOLS OF THEIR TRADE MAY SOON BECOME GOVERNMENT PROPERTY MAY ALSO PROMPT GREATER NUMBERS OF FISHERMEN TO STRIKE OUT FOR MALAYSIA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, SEA RESCUES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KUALA03371
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780175-1072
Format: TEL
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780421/aaaaaqxa.tel
Line Count: 116
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 540e49a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2861649
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FACTORS AFFECTING BOAT REFUGEE FLOW TO MALAYSIA
TAGS: SREF, MY
To: STATE INS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/540e49a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014